



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM RUTO,  
C.G.H., PhD; PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-  
CHIEF OF THE KENYA DEFENCE FORCES, DURING  
THE ACCESSION CEREMONY OF KENYA TO THE  
INTERNATIONAL VACCINE INSTITUTE**

**JUNE 5TH, 2024**

**SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA**

1. I am delighted to join you as we celebrate Kenya's accession to the membership of the International Vaccine Institute. This is an important milestone which demonstrates our dedication as a country to achieve health commodity security through sustained public-private and international collaborations to promote investment in research and development as well as in the manufacturing of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.
2. This significant achievement is the culmination of a well-coordinated joint endeavour between the Ministry of Health, the Kenya BioVax Institute and the Kenya Medical Research Institute, in conjunction with the experts from the International Vaccines Institute, whose efforts I am delighted to recognise and appreciate. Congratulations.
3. Today, we have an opportunity to reflect on the journey we have travelled and to remember where we started. The challenges we faced in accessing medical counter-measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially the availability of vaccines, only make today's event even more remarkable. The vulnerabilities of the global healthcare systems exposed stark inequalities and inequities in access to essential medical resources for significant populations at a time of grave existential peril.
4. In Africa, we did not just witness, but also bore the brunt of arbitrary distribution and denial of access as well as vaccine nationalism which, coupled with Africa's over-reliance on external manufacturers, magnified our situation.



5. The time has come, therefore, for Africa to actualise health sovereignty by liberating itself from dependency on unsustainable frameworks, and accelerating initiatives to become self-sufficient in vaccine production. A fundamental value of Pan-African solidarity is that no one is free until all people are free. In vaccine production and supply terms, no one is safe until everyone is safe. Making vaccines universally accessible to all our people, regardless of nationality and status, is an urgent imperative that we must respond to without hesitation.
  
6. It is encouraging, therefore, that the African Union has demonstrated strong resolve in taking effective measures to bolster the continent's healthcare infrastructure, human capital and institutional frameworks. The collective determination of Africa's leaders in shaping the future of healthcare by establishing a resilient, equitable and sustainable vaccine manufacturing ecosystem is beyond doubt. I am proud to state that Kenya remains steadfast in its commitment to collaborate with partners like the African Union Commission, Africa CDC, the African Medicines Agency, the World Health Organisation and the IVI to make a strong contribution to this endeavour. We have every intention and are taking effective measures, to prepare Kenya and Africa for future outbreaks, epidemics, pandemics and other health emergencies by translating this commitment into tangible results within a very short time.



7. Furthermore, as Kenya graduates from dependency on donor support for the supply of routine vaccines to support primary immunisation programmes, the partnership and collaboration, whose successful culmination we are witnessing here today, will guarantee sustainable self-sufficiency in the supply of these commodities. This will go a long way in fulfilling a fundamental objective of the Universal Health Coverage strategic pillar of our Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda.
8. Looking ahead as a country, we cherish this partnership and embrace its ambitious goals. The establishment of the IVI Country and Project Office in Nairobi, Kenya, shows our commitment, ability, readiness and willingness as a government to accelerate the progress of our Universal Health Coverage agenda and to promote African self-sufficiency in the most critical dimensions of healthcare. Under this partnership, we will strive to strengthen our health systems by assuring commodity security through research, development and manufacturing. I believe in our collective ability to achieve even greater things.
9. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Dr Jerome Kim and to appreciate his leadership, which has enabled the IVI fraternity to collaborate successfully with counterparts in our Ministry of Health, including those from the Kenya BioVax and the Kenya Medical Research Institute, making this event possible.
10. I also thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and everyone else who contributed to the accession of Kenya to the IVI and the organisation of this event—well done.



11. As we celebrate this achievement, I urge you to keep pushing the boundaries of innovation and enhance our support for research and development in biotechnology because that will enable us to take charge and define the future of healthcare. Your commitment is vital for our progress. Let us therefore use this milestone as a platform for launching a path into the future through exploration and discovery, and work together in the spirit of solidarity and partnership to build resilient health systems and ensure that the whole world is prepared for any health emergency in future.
  
12. We recall our past experiences, however unpleasant, with a view to consolidating the gains already secured, particularly on lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic and deploying innovation to devise a bold way forward for Kenya, Africa and the world.
  
13. This is why I am very proud of what we have accomplished and confident about the transformative achievements we shall definitely accomplish together as we go into the future.
  
14. Thank you once again for having us here and for your steadfast support.

**I thank you.**

